

## Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 NSAE-00  
NSCE-00 SSO-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 /055 W  
-----114514 220954Z /15  
O 220930Z FEB 78  
FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9469

C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 1466

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGSC SHUM, PINS, KS  
SUBJECT: OPEN LETTER FROM FORMER MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS

REF: STATE 44834

1. EMBASSY AGREES WITH STRATEGY PROPOSED IN PARAGRAPH TWO REFTEL. COMMENTING ON DETAILS OF LETTER MIGHT MAKE ROKG DEVOTE GREATER ATTENTION TO LETTER AND ITS SIGNERS, AND, SINCE COMMENTING ON DETAILS IN THIS CASE WOULD INVOLVE, TO SOME EXTENT, REBUTTING DISSIDENT VIEWS ON SOME ISSUES, COULD MAKE THE DISSIDENT COMMUNITY FEEL THAT THE US IS SIDING AGAINST THEM -- A FELLING MOST DISSIDENTS DO NOT NOW HAVE.

2. IT IS OBVIOUS THAT THE DISSIDENTS WOULD NOT HAVE WRITTEN THE STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT AS IT WAS SUBMITTED. THIRD PARTIES ALWAYS RUN THE RISK THAT THEIR VIEW WILL DIFFER FROM THAT OF THE TWO SIDES DIRECTLY INVOLVED.

3. AS THE DEPARTMENT HAS NOTED, THE USE OF CONTENTIOUS PHRASING IN KOREAN MANIFESTOES IS COMMON. IN THIS CASE, HARD HITTING RHETORIC MAY HAVE SEEMED MORE APPROPRIATE TO THE WRITERS FOR OTHER REASONS AS WELL. THE STATE DEPT REPORT BROKE ON THE KOREAN PUBLIC THROUGH THE  
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KOREAN PRESS WHICH DWELT ON ITS POSITIVE ASPECTS EXCLUSIVELY -- ONE NEWSPAPER HEADLINE BRAGGED "STATE DEPARTMENT REPORTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS SAFEGUARDED IN KOREA". DISTRIBUTION OF THE ACTUAL REPORT COULD NOT MATCH THE PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPRESSION MADE BY THE LOCAL MEDIA, AND DISSIDENTS THEREFORE APPROACHED THE REPORT AS SOMETHING WHICH HAD TO BE REFUTED IN THE STRONGEST

TERMS.

4. FURTHERMORE, DISSIDENTS FELT THEY LOST INITIATIVE IN HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN WHEN ALL BUT ONE OF THE MYONGDONG PRISONERS WERE RELEASED, AND THEY ARE TRYING HARD TO REGAIN IT. SO FAR THIS YEAR, THEY HAVE ISSUED STATEMENTS MANY TIMES MORE CRITICAL THAN THE MYONGDONG DECLARATION AND THEY ARE CONTINUING TO DO SO IN THE HOPE OF PRECIPITATING ANOTHER INCIDENT WHICH MIGHT MAKE THE KOREAN PUBLIC AWARE OF THEIR MESSAGE AND WHICH WILL CERTAINLY ATTRACT FOREIGN, AND, IN PARTICULAR, US ATTENTION. THE OPEN LETTER IS IN EMBASSY VIEW DESIGNED TO REAWAKEN FOREIGN PUBLIC OPINION TO DISSIDENTS PLIGHT.

5. YUN PAN-UNG, ONE OF THE MYONGDONG PRISONERS WHO SIGNED OPEN LETTER, CALLED ON EMBOFF TODAY TO LOOK AT DEPT REPORT WHICH HE HAD NOT SEEN. HE SAID A MARCH 1 MEETING IS PLANNED AT WHICH MYONGDONG PRISONERS WILL RECONFIRM MYONGDONG DECLARATION AND REENDORSE OPEN LETTER. AFTER GOING OVER STATE DEPARTMENT REPORT HE SAID HE THOUGHT TONE OF OPEN LETTER WAS UNDULY STRIDENT. HE SAID THAT ALTHOUGH COUCHED IN DIPLOMATIC LANGUAGE, REPORT GAVE ESSENTIALS OF EXISTING OPPRESSIVE SITUATION. HE THOUGHT, HOWEVER, ECONOMIC SECTION OF REPORT WAS TOO ROSY. NEVERTHELESS, HE RETAINED HIS OPINION THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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REENDORSEMENT OF THE LETTER ON MARCH 1 WOULD BE GOOD TACTIC FOR HUMAN RIGHTS STRUGGLE AT THIS POINT.

6. WE ARE INFORMING ROKG LEADERSHIP OF OUR CONCERN THAT INDIVIDUALS NOT BE PERSECUTED FOR EXPRESSING THEIR VIEWS IN OPEN LETTER, EMPHASIZING PARTICULARLY NEGATIVE IMPACT ON US PUBLIC OPINION OF ACTION TAKEN IN CONNECTION WITH LETTER TO US PRESIDENT. THIS CONCERN HAS BEEN CONVEYED TO MOFA AMERICAN AFFAIRS DIRECTOR PAK SANG YONG AND WILL BE GIVEN TO ACTING FOREIGN MINISTER AND APPROPRIATE LEVEL OF KCIA AS SOON AS POSSIBLE. IN REPLY TO EMBASSY INQUIRY, ROKG REPORTED THAT PROFESSOR YI MUN-YONG, MYONGDONG PRISONER WHO HAS READ LETTER ON FEB 18, HAD NOT BEEN ARRESTED BUT HAD BEEN INVITED IN TO ANSWER QUESTIONS. THERE APPEAR TO BE NO PLANS TO CHARGE YI. REPORTEDLY, POLICE HAVE STEPPED UP SURVEILLANCE OF ALL FORMER MYONGDONG PRISONERS IN LAST FEW DAYS. THIS, HOWEVER, MAY NOT BE RELATED TO OPEN LETTER, BUT MAY BE A PREVENTIVE MEASURE TO FRUSTRATE POTENTIAL PLANS TO MOUNT AN INCIDENT ON MARCH 1.

7. WE WILL CONTINUE TO MONITOR SITUATION.  
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## Message Attributes

**Automatic Decaptioning:** X  
**Capture Date:** 01 jan 1994  
**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** HUMAN RIGHTS, DISSIDENT FACTIONS, PUBLIC CORRESPONDENCE  
**Control Number:** n/a  
**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 22 feb 1978  
**Decaption Date:** 01 jan 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 20 Mar 2014  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
**Document Number:** 1978SEOUL01466  
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**Document Unique ID:** 00  
**Drafter:** n/a  
**Enclosure:** n/a  
**Executive Order:** GS  
**Errors:** N/A  
**Expiration:**  
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**Reference:** 78 STATE 44834  
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**SAS ID:** 3519625  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** OPEN LETTER FROM FORMER MYONGDONG DEFENDANTS  
**TAGS:** SOPN, SHUM, PINS, KS  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
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